

About the Hybrid Town Meeting Study Committee

ARTICLE ? VOTE/HYBRID TOWN MEETING STUDY COMMITTEE

VOTED: That Town Meeting hereby establishes a Hybrid Town Meeting Study Committee to be structured, organized, and charged as follows:

Hybrid Town Meeting Study Committee

1. Committee Membership and Organization

A. The Committee shall consist of no less than five (5) and no more than nine (9) members, the number to be determined and appointed by the Town Moderator, but a majority of whom should be current or former Town Meeting Members, and a member of Town staff appointed by the Town Manager as a non-voting member.¹ It is expected that the Study Committee will have access to and be able to consult with the Town Counsel Department, the Town Information Technology Department, the Town Clerk, the Town ADA Coordinator, and any other Town departments and employees, who may have pertinent expertise to share with the Study Committee.

B. The Town Moderator or their designee shall serve as chair of the committee for the purposes of the Committee's first organizational meeting, in which the Committee may elect officers as it deems appropriate.

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¹ insert language from Doug Heim: "Voting membership of the study committee shall reflect racial, ethnic, and other forms of diversity in Town Meeting."

² voting members of the committee (between 5 and 9 total members as determined by the Moderator) at any given time shall constitute a quorum, and decisions shall be based on the vote of a simple majority of those committee members present and voting."

2. Committee Charge

The Committee is charged with comprehensively examining options and requirements for conducting Town Meeting with hybrid participation. The Committee's study shall include, but not be limited to:

- A. Identifying if any best practices by other town meetings in the conduct of hybrid meetings;
- B. Creating opportunities for outreach to Town Meeting Members to solicit their input regarding their interests and concerns in conducting Town Meeting with hybrid participation; such outreach might be on-going to reflect the Study Committee's new understandings and knowledge;
- C. Identifying potential legal requirements, issues and constraints in conducting Town Meeting with hybrid participation;
- D. Identifying technical requirements, issues and constraints in conducting Town Meeting with hybrid participation, including order of magnitude estimates of the costs of the requisite technology;
- E. Identifying potential new policies and procedures requisite for conducting Town Meeting with hybrid participation;
- F. Identifying potential benefits and negatives of conducting Town Meeting with hybrid participation, especially pertaining to the potential for increased or decreased interest in serving as a Town Meeting Member for all resident populations and specifically for historically under-represented populations in Town Meeting.

3. Committee Reports

The Committee shall study and make recommendations to Town Meeting on the pros and cons of the Town conducting Town Meeting with hybrid participation, including:

- A. Providing information and updates to the Town Moderator as requested;
- B. Developing specific proposals for the implementation of Town Meeting with hybrid participation;
- C. Supporting the implementation of the above proposals as needed;
- D. Making reports of its progress, findings, and recommendations to every Annual Town Meeting until the Study Committee makes its final report;

4. Dissolution of the Study Committee

³The Committee shall be dissolved at the discretion of the Town Moderator or upon completion and submission of its final report to the Annual Town Meeting.

³ Per the discussion at 3/18 TMPC meeting and as reviewed by Doug Heim, replace with "The Committee shall be dissolved by a vote of Town Meeting."

Adam Auster
MEMORANDUM

To: Town Meeting Procedures Committee
From: Adam Auster
Date: March 28, 2023
Subject: Study committee resolution

Dear Committee members, below find four considerations and a proposal about the resolution to establish a study committee:

1. A concise committee charge is more useful to everybody; more likely to be understood and assimilated into the committee's DNA.
2. The charge should include a definition of a hybrid meeting.
3. Perhaps the only substantive change, I propose distinguishing between individual participation ("I'm busy at nights but could participate remotely") versus the potential, if any, for hybrid to expand representation of underrepresented groups. Also, I propose to prioritize the latter, and the overall functioning of Town Meeting, over the former, for the purpose of the study committee's work.

The Committee is empowered to consider other issues but the charge from Town Meeting should reflect priority "must do" tasks. Mentioning something in the charge elevates the thing into a mandate.

That's a change to 2.F.

4. I thought 2.B in the most recent draft was vague, especially given that committees hold public meetings and publish minutes. However, if we want to require the Committee to do particular things—like hold at least one public hearing—we should clearly state that. Not just say "well, the committee could for instance do this if it wanted to."

Something like the following might substitute for sections 2 and 3 of the draft:

The Committee shall assess the feasibility, benefits, and drawbacks of conducting Town Meeting with hybrid participation, defined as a combination of in-person and remote debate, voting, and calculation of quorum.

The purpose is to consider improvements to Town Meeting, and its value to the Town, by taking advantage of new technologies. If the Committee finds that changes are both feasible and, on balance, beneficial, its report to Town Meeting shall include recommendations for new uses of technologies and new procedures.

Questions central to this inquiry include, but are not limited to, (1) the potential for Town Meeting to be generally more representative of the Town as a whole by empowering underrepresented constituencies, and (2) the impact, both good and bad, of hybrid options on the functioning of Town Meeting as an effective and collegial deliberative body.

In the course of its work, the Committee shall consider potential technical, legal, and procedural requirements, issues, and constraints. It shall

- identify any best practices by other town meetings in the conduct of hybrid meetings
- provide opportunities for public comment on its work
- provide information about its work to the Town Moderator at the Moderator's request
- report on its work to every Annual Town Meeting until the Study Committee makes its final report;

It may

- solicit the views of Town Meeting Members related to the Committee's work.

No doubt this could be improved, too.

Adam